

Members of the House Natural Resource Committee and Representative Krayton Kerns.  
My name is Richard E. Grady, a private citizen and member of a family who has a ranch located 25 miles Northwest of Helena.

I am in support of House Bill No. 468 which I feel is making an attempt to establish better communications between the private aviation community and the state agencies regarding the use and accountability of state aircraft and building a working relationship with the private sector.

**I support Section 2 – Purpose. The legislature recognizes that private business is able to provide many services in a more cost-effective and economical matter than government and seeks to encourage the continuation and growth of private aviation businesses that can provide wildfire suppression, detection and prevention with the state. In addition, the continued economic viability of businesses to provide aviation services in Montana is important to the state.**

I have attached some photo points and a one page narrative regarding my family and members of my community the threat this past summer regarding the Davis 5 Prescribed Burn which was an escaped prescribed control burn that turned into a wildland fire declaration on Federal Ownership on August 26, 2010.

I would like to highlight some key points and lesson learned that I hope will help in establishing better communication among the private aviation community and are state agencies with the passage of this bill, which should have amendments to come to some agreements among the parties involved.

1. The ranch pays for forest fire protection on classified acreage to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) for wildland protection. The ranch was threaten but worked with all state, federal, tribal, local governments and the private sector to address the threat and worked on keeping the politics out of the efforts of managing the fire.
2. The ranch provided assistance and a field under the ranch ownership to the overhead team assigned to the incident in establishing a based camp for handcrews, ground support equipment, catering services, etc on the evening August 26, 2010. This involved resources from the private sector, state, tribal, federal and local governments.
3. The ranch helped the overhead team to establish a helicopter staging area on a neighbor's private property to stage private, and state helicopters in the area to support the incident.
4. The ranch allowed the overhead to utilize its private 160 acre lake referred to as the Gravelly Range Lake that is used of for irrigation and livestock watering for the helicopters to obtain water for their bucket operations on the incident.

**Recommendation to the committee:**

All private property owners pay for some form of fire protection in the state too protect rangeland, structures and classified timber forests. The federal ownership next too the ranch is affected by the lack of management of federal lands because of years of lawsuits to manage the timber, and now is affected by the Mountain Pine Beetle and Spruce Budworm.

It is important that the state agencies and private aviation community **sit at the table face to face** to discuss the concerns, understand the issues, and provide accurate cost accounting data that is understood on operational costs, costs associate for training and what the private sector sees that must be followed under FAA regulations, etc.

As a family who was affected by the Davis fire and the community, we observed state and private contracted aircraft resources utilized on the Davis fire involving fixed and rotary aircraft involving bucket drops of water and fire retardant. We supported the incident operations regardless if it was private, state, federal or tribal resource regarding the use of aircraft and ground resources.

Let's think in a positive way in the future too work together, serve the property owners and citizens of this state. I appreciate Representative Krayton Kerns to bring forth this bill, if anything, to open up the communications among our private aviation resources with the state agencies.

Thank-you for the opportunity to testify before the committee today.

Sincerely

/s/ *Richard E. Grady*

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## Helena National Forest

# DAVIS FIRE REVIEW SUMMARY

This document summarizes the results, conclusions, and recommendations of the Davis Escaped Prescribed Fire Report and immediate actions the Helena National Forest will implement. The Helena gives commendations to the Interagency Review Team for a thorough report. This knowledge and our future actions will strengthen our Prescribed Fire Program and enhance our ability to maintain, restore vegetative communities, achieve desired resource conditions, and protect life and property.

Summarized below are the review team's findings that led to the wildland fire declaration of the Davis 5 Prescribed Burn on August 26, 2010.

1. **Awareness of potential prescribed fire complexity**—As a group there needed to be better recognition of a low probability, high consequence event for this prescribed burn.
2. **Fuel type differences inside and outside the planned burn unit**—The Davis 5 Prescribed Fire Plan does not address the abundance of subalpine fir inside and outside of the unit and does not include a discussion of the associated spotting potential and probability of ignition.
3. **Spot Forecasts**—The winds predicted in the spot weather forecast changed between the forecast received the afternoon on August 24 and immediately prior to ignitions on August 25. The prescribed burn personnel stated they did not note any differences between the two forecasts.
4. **Weather/Fuels Conditions**—Weather conditions crossed a critical threshold for the torching of subalpine fir and as the winds shifted from upslope to a westerly direction a number of embers spotted outside of the unit.
5. **Other conditions**—The saddle in the southern part of the unit, the proximity of the fuels to the boundary, and the slash in the last mixed timber stand to burn in the burn unit contributed to the escape of the prescribed burn.
6. **Compressed timeframe to complete the project**—Given the fire weather watch that escalated into a red flag warning, there was little opportunity for error or course-correction when spots occurred.

After outlining their findings, the review team provided eight recommendations within three areas of concentration. Below are those areas and the Helena National Forest's planned actions in response to those recommendations.

1. **Administrative Processes:** The Helena National Forest will ensure that all fire qualification and delegation of authority will be documented in writing prior to prescribe burn ignition. All burn plans will include a robust discussion about seasonal and site specific complexities.
2. **Communications:** The Helena National Forest will utilize a variety of methods to improve communications both within the agency and with the public. A communication plan and public involvement strategy will be developed at the local level to include landowners, local and state agencies, local and state officials, community leaders and media.
3. **Complexity Factor(s):** The Helena National Forest will use current information in all aspects of analyzing the potential for a successful prescribed burn. Information to be considered will include current fuels data, spot weather forecasts, changed forest conditions, research data and findings, contingency plans, fire behavior modeling, and firefighter safety.

The *Davis 5 Prescribed Fire—Escaped Fire Review* is posted on the Helena Forest website at: [www.fs.fed.us/r1/helena/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/helena/).

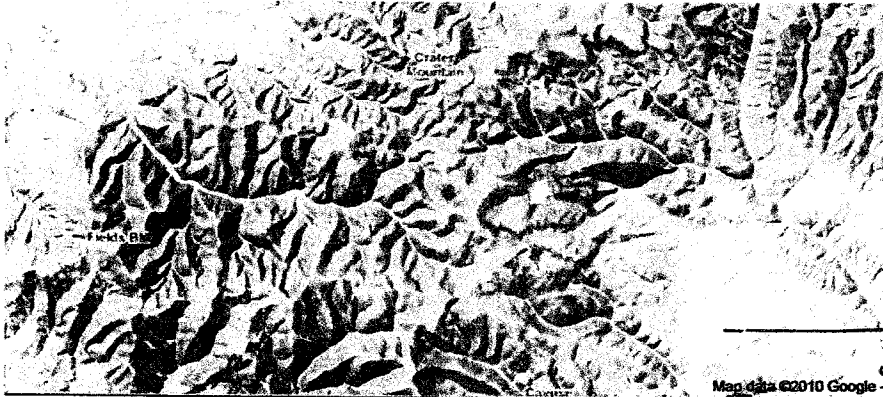
# InciWeb - Incident Information System

## Davis Fire

INCIDENT UPDATED 16 MIN. AGO

### Approximate Location

46.876 latitude, -112.499 longitude [reset view](#)



Gravelly Range  
Lake

### Incident Overview

#### MONDAY, AUGUST 30, 2010 ROAD CLOSURE

The US Forest Service has closed Fool Hen Road (#1848) from milepost 0.0 - 3.72 (Stemple Pass Road to Gould Creek Road).

Exemptions to the closure include...

- 1- Any person with a permit authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission.
- 2- Owners and lessees of land in the area.
- 3- Residents of the area.
- 4- Any Federal, State, or local officer, or member of an organized rescue or firefighting force in the performance of an official duty.

The Davis fire is located approximately 25 mile northwest of Helena, MT.

The fire is being managed by the Northern Rockies Secret T2 Incident Management Team.

For more information contact the information office at the Davis Fire Camp, 406-368-5559.

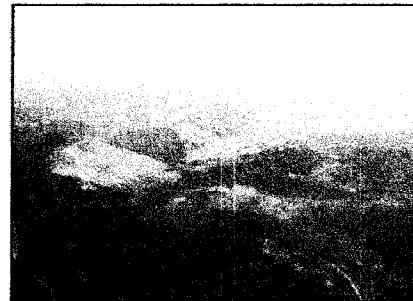


Image options: [ [Enlarge](#) ] [ [Full Size](#) ]

### Basic Information

Incident Type	Wildfire
Cause	Human
Date of Origin	Thursday August 26th, 2010 approx. 01:13 PM
Location	25 miles northwest of Helena, MT
Incident Commander	Jess Secrest

### Current Situation

Total Personnel	115
Size	2,015 acres
Percent Contained	100%
Estimated Containment Date	Wednesday September 01st, 2010 approx. 12:00 AM
Fuels Involved	Timber (grass and understory). Fuel Model 10; Subalpine fir, Lodgepole pine and mountain pine beetle kill.
Fire Behavior	Pockets of smoldering from the interior.
Significant Events	Gridding for hot spots, mop up and rehab.

### Outlook

Planned Actions	Patrol and mop up. Transition with Type 3 organization. Transfer of command planned for 0600 on Friday.
Growth Potential	Low
Terrain Difficulty	High
Remarks	Acres by ownership: 156 acres of BLM, 383 acres of private land, and 1476 acres of USFS. Main fire area is 1938 acres.



00/26/2010